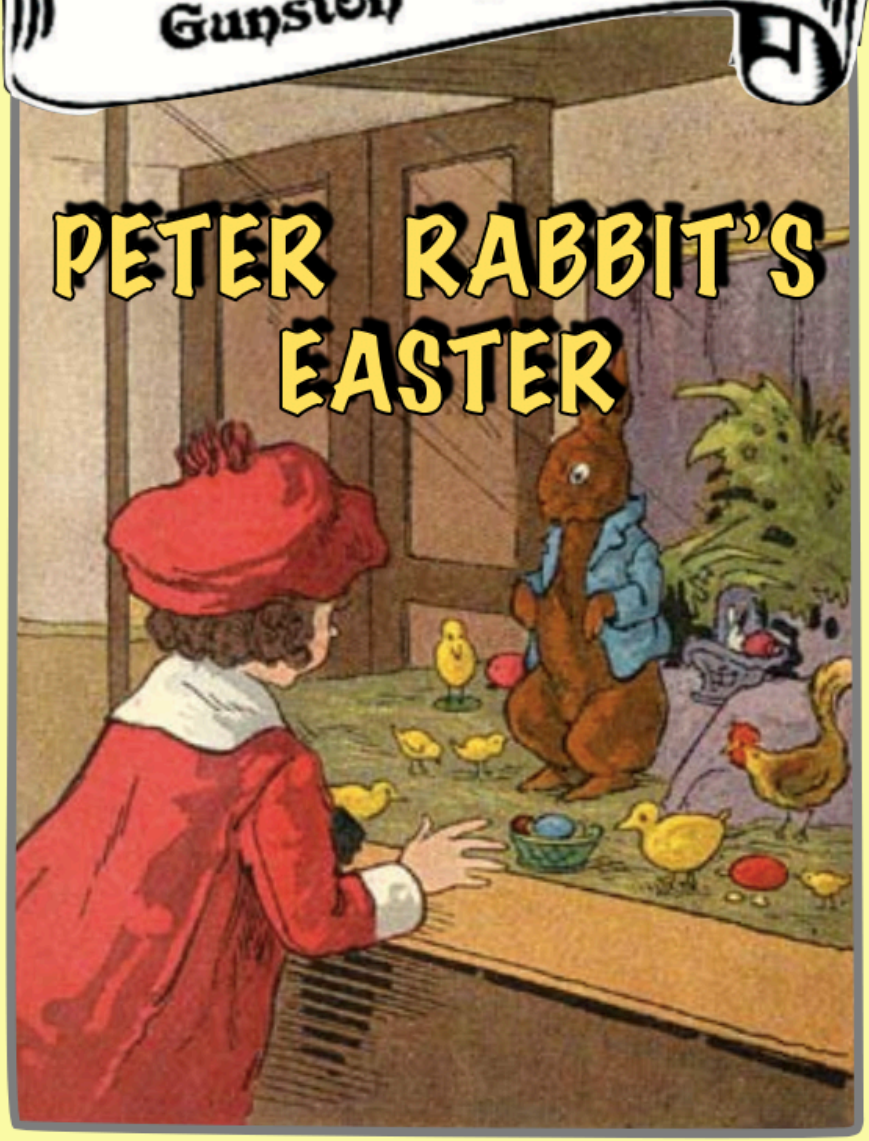
Gunston Classics

PETER RABBIT'S EASTER



Linda Almond

The Gunston Trust

PETER RABBIT'S EASTER

By Linda Almond

The Gunston Trust
Nonviolence
In Children's Literature

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PETER RABBIT'S EASTER

Peter Rabbit's Raster

PETER RABBIT'S EASTER

ALL good little children know that Peter Rabbit lived with his Mother and his little sisters, Flopsy, and Mopsy, and Cotton-tail, in a cosy little house under the roots of a big fir tree at the very edge of a wood.

Springtime had come again, and they were happy because they could now play outdoors all day long.

So every morning right after breakfast Peter, and Flopsy, and Mopsy,

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and Cotton-tail would play games such as leap-frog, and Red Rover, and hide-and-go-seek. And, oh, what jolly times they did have, until Peter would become so rough that his sisters would refuse to play with him. Cotton-tail was sorry that Peter was not a well-behaved little rabbit, and she often begged him with tears in her eyes to change his ways. Peter loved Cotton-tail very dearly and would promise her time and time again that he would do his best to be good.

But, as you all know, Peter was full of mischief and it was very hard for him to be a good little rabbit like Flopsy, and Mopsy, and Cotton-

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tail. Peter always wanted to do the very things old Mother Rabbit had often told him he must not do.

One day he ran off and got lost in the wood just after Mother Rabbit had said that he must never, never, never go into the wood alone. A wood-chopper brought him home just before dark, and the wood-chopper told Mother Rabbit that Peter was almost under his ax, but he happened to see him just in the nick of time. Peter told Flopsy, and Mopsy, and Cotton-tail that he wasn't one bit scared. But of course he was, only, like all little boys, he wouldn't admit that he was scared. Old Mother Rabbit was very angry

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and sent Peter to bed without any supper.

One morning bright and early Mother Rabbit put on her coat and hat, and packed her basket cram full of tid-bits to take over to Uncle Jack Rabbit who lived in a burrow near a broom-straw field.

"Now, children," she said, calling them to her side, "be good while I am gone, and don't go far away from home."

Flopsy, and Mopsy, and Cotton-tail said they would obey their mother, but Peter was hopping up and down and pretending he did not hear.

So Mother Rabbit bade Flopsy,

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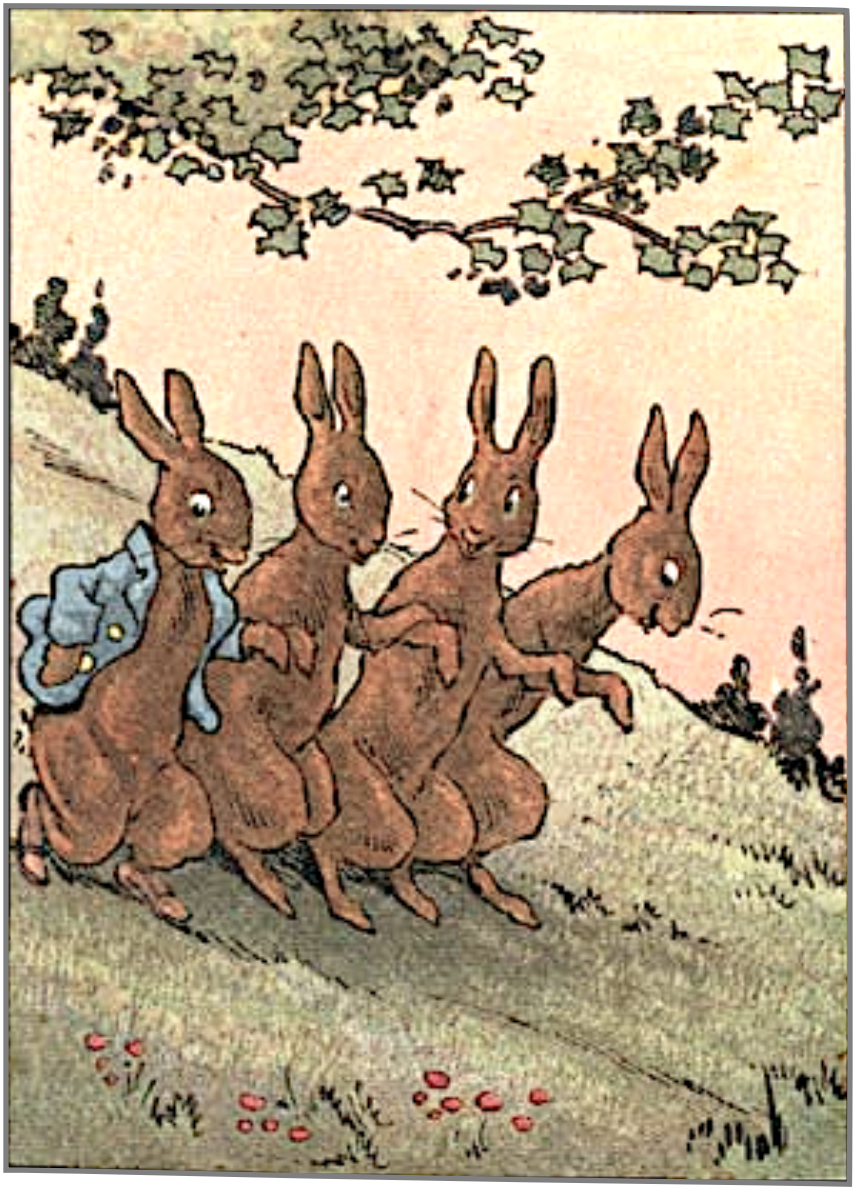
and Mopsy, and Cotton-tail, and Peter goodbye, and they all rushed to the window and waved their hands as long as they could see her. Then, when her red bonnet had disappeared over the top of the hill, Peter told his sisters that the violets were in bloom down by the brook. They shouted in glee and joined hands and scampered off for dear life to pick the violets. Flopsy, and Mopsy, and Cotton-tail said their Mother would be pleased to see such pretty flowers on the table when she came back from Uncle Jack Rabbit's house.

When they reached the violet patch Mopsy thought she saw pret-



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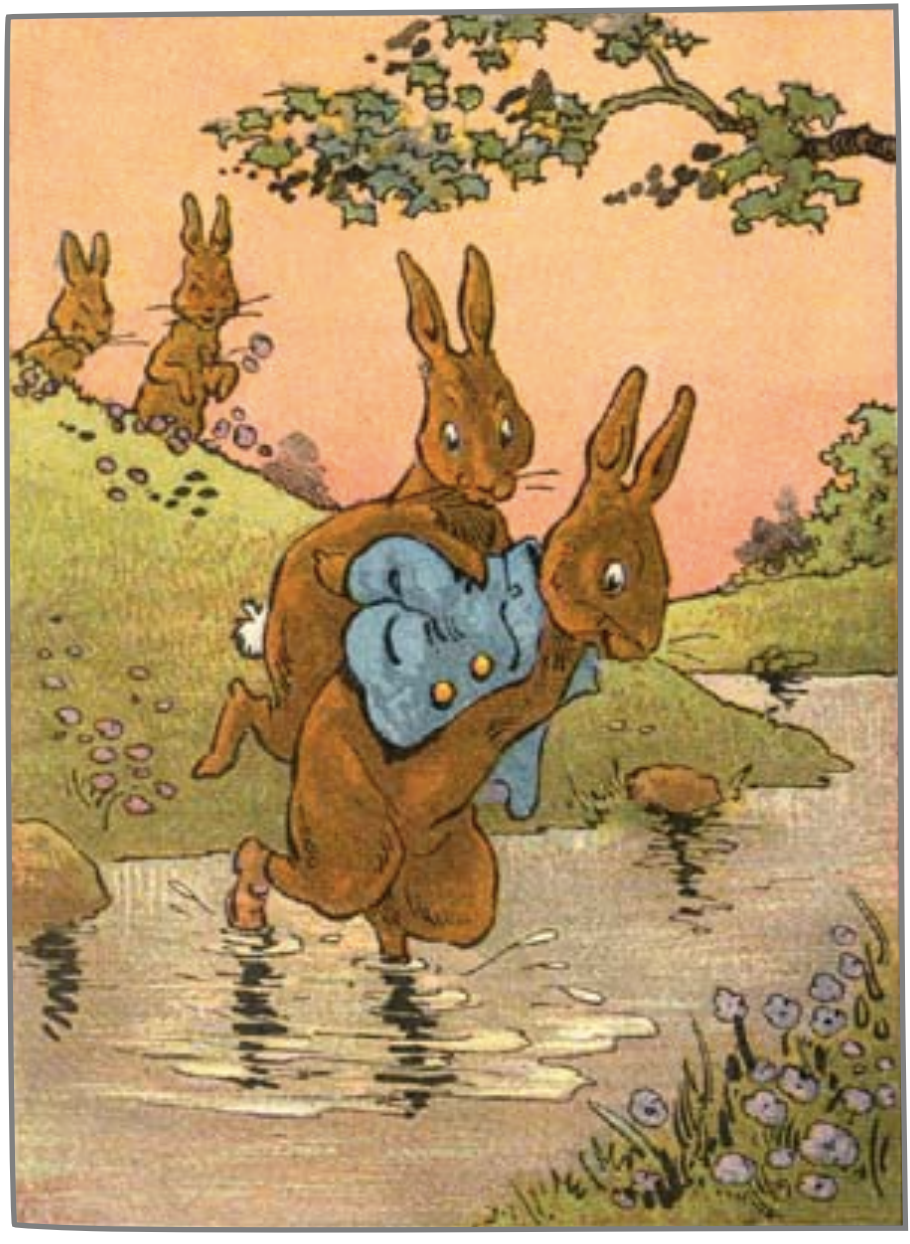
tier violets on the other side of the brook, but she was afraid to cross over for fear she might get her feet wet. Peter said he did not mind getting his feet wet and offered to carry her over piggy-back. How Flopsy and Cotton-tail laughed when they saw Mopsy on Peter's back crossing the stream.

But poor little Mopsy had to get her feet wet after all, because Peter hurrahed, and kicked up his heels, and refused to carry Mopsy back again. And the worst of it was that the violets were not one bit prettier over there than those on the side where Flopsy and Cotton-tail had stayed.



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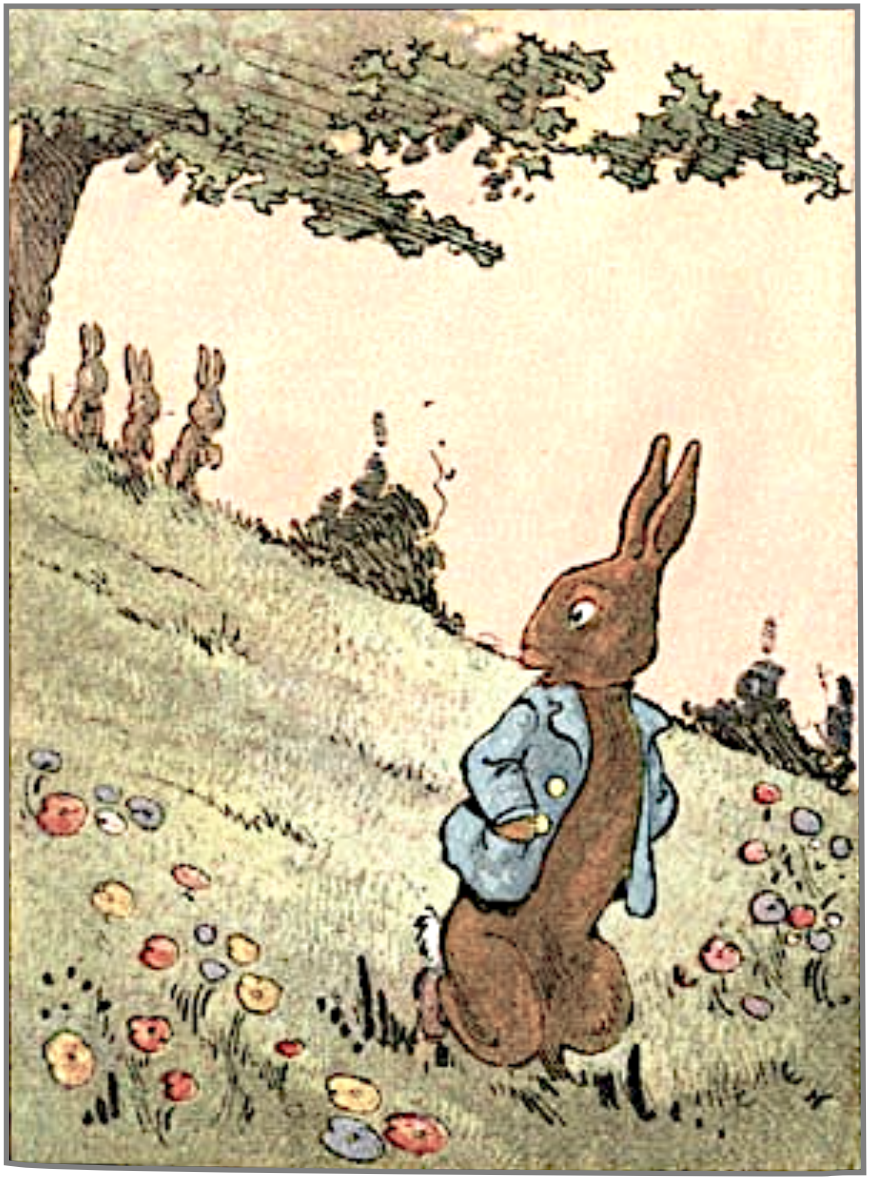
Then Peter poked his hands down deep into his little pockets and boldly announced that he was going off by himself. He said only girls picked flowers anyway.

"Oh, Peter, please don't go away," begged Cotton-tail. "I am afraid something might happen to you."

But Peter tossed his head and called merrily over his shoulder as he danced away, "Don't worry, little Cotton-tail. I won't stay away long."

Flopsy, and Mopsy, and Cotton-tail watched Peter until he was out of sight.

"Oh, dear!" said Flopsy, "what will Mother say?"



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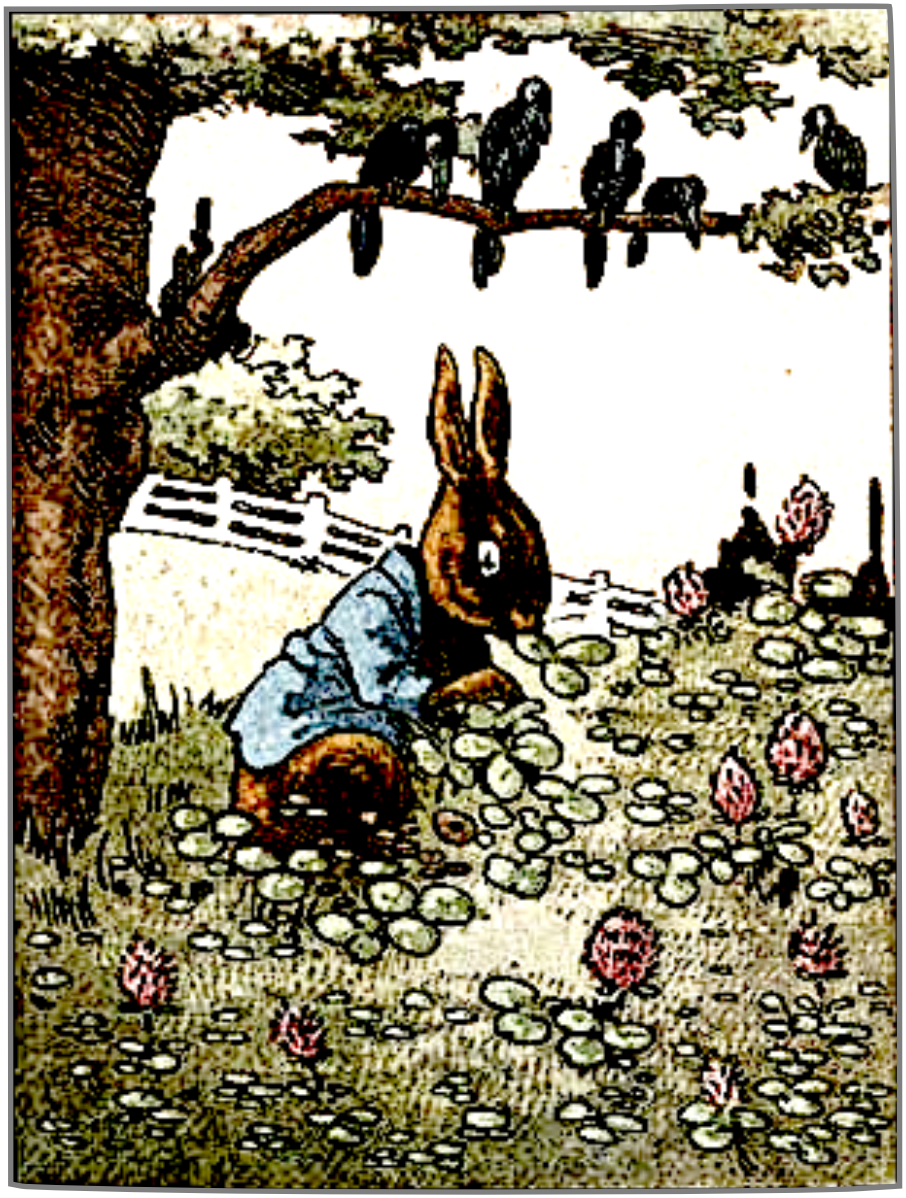
"Oh, dear! oh, dear! oh, dear!" said Mopsy, "I wish Peter wasn't such a naughty boy."

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! oh, dear!" sighed Cotton-tail, who loved Peter better than Flopsy and Mopsy loved him, "I do hope nothing will happen to Peter."

Peter went through Farmer McGregor's clover field and stopped here and there to nibble at the luscious clover buds. Oh, how he smacked his lips, thinking he never had had such a good time in his life. But as he was loitering along, for Peter was never in a hurry, he looked up and saw a tree filled with crows.



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"Caw, caw, caw," they shrieked down at Peter.

"Is this your clover field, Mr. Crow?" Peter politely inquired. To tell the truth Peter was a little bit frightened, for the crows looked very black and very angry.

"Caw, caw, caw," they loudly replied.

And Peter, thinking that the clover field really belonged to the crows and that they were ordering him off because he was eating their clover buds, ran off just as fast as he could.

Peter ran, and ran, and ran, paying no attention to the direction in which he was going, until presently

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he saw that he was close to the town nearby. He felt very much frightened because he now knew that he was quite far away from home. He was very tired, so he thought it best to sit down and rest for awhile, and think what he should do next. Just as he started to sit down he saw a great big dog trotting briskly towards him.

"Dear, dear, dear, what shall I do!" wailed poor Peter, and since there was no place to hide he ran towards the town as fast as his tired little legs could carry him. But back of him, coming faster, and faster, and faster, and closer, and closer, and closer all the time, was

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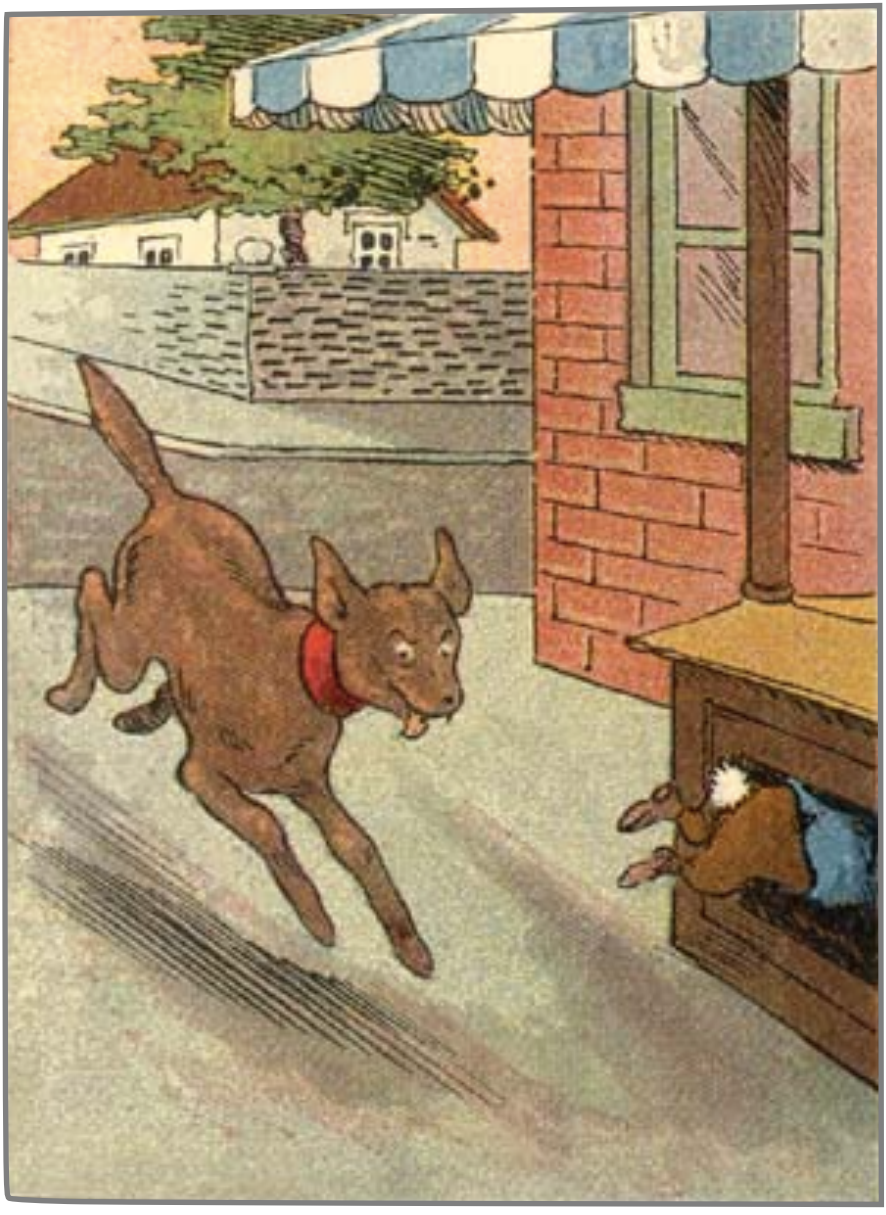
the great big dog, calling, "Stop! stop! stop!"

Of course Peter did not stop, but ran all the faster, until he came to the main street of the town. Then, all of a sudden, he saw, as he ran down the street, a tiny window opening into a cellar under a store. He was so little that he got through it, but the great big dog was so big he couldn't, so Peter dropped down into the cellar to safety.

"My, what a narrow escape!" he cried, drawing a long breath of relief.

In their cosy little home under the fir tree old Mother Rabbit, and Flopsy, and Mopsy, and Cotton-tail



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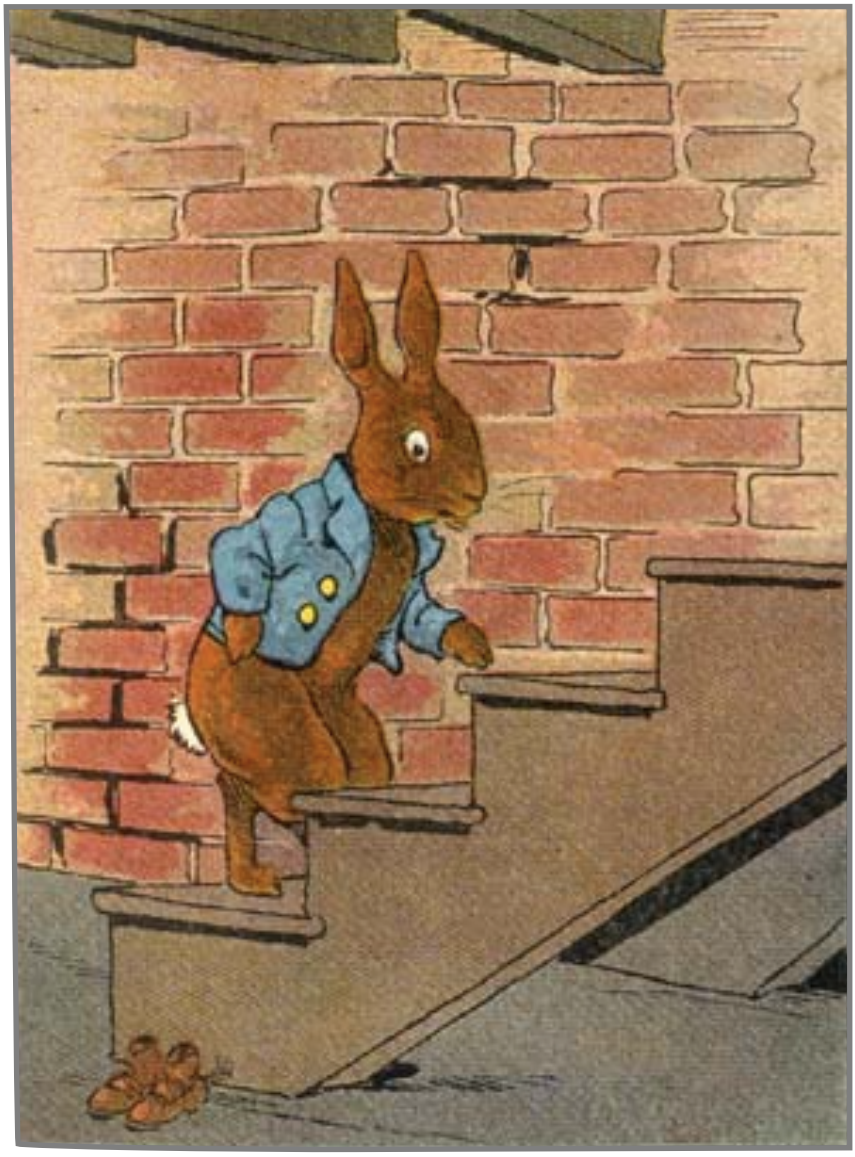
were very much worried over Peter. Flopsy and Mopsy thought he ought to be punished. So did Mother Rabbit think Peter ought to be punished. But Cotton-tail only said that she hoped Peter would come back to them safe and sound.

When Peter tried to get out of the cellar he discovered that some stupid person had closed the little window through which he had scooted in. So he sniffed about until at last he found a stairway. Then he took off his little shoes, so as not to make any noise, and softly stole up the steps.

And then what do you suppose Peter saw? A wonderful toy shop



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that really looked like a part of fairyland. There were guns, and horns, and drums, and dolls, and playhouses, and roller skates, and talking machines—and oh, just about everything in the world you could wish for. But, more than all, there seemed to be no end of Easter toys, such as cunning little baskets filled with colored eggs, fuzzy yellow chickies, though of course they were not alive but only make-believe, and so many stuffed bunnies that Peter's eyes almost popped out of his head.

"I never saw such a lovely place," thought Peter. "I might just as well stay here a little while and look about."

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And just that minute, when he was just beginning to enjoy himself, he felt some one lift him up by his ears. He started to cry right out loud, but he thought maybe he had better not, and the next thing he knew he was set down in the show window in front of the toy shop, right in the midst of a great crowd of funny stuffed rabbits.

Peter was surely frightened now. He wondered what was to become of him, and then he decided he would sit up straight and stiff like the stuffed rabbits, pretending that he was a stuffed rabbit too.

But after awhile he got dreadfully tired sitting straight and stiff in one

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position, and he began to wiggle his ears and wiggle his little pink nose. Then he wished with all his heart that he was back home under the fir tree with his Mother, and Flopsy, and Mopsy, and Cotton-tail.

Easter shoppers crowded around the window of the toy shop, and how they did smile when they saw Peter. As for Peter, he thought they were very impolite when they pointed at him, and he wiggled his nose as much as to tell them so, and then they smiled and smiled and pointed all the more.

"Suppose somebody buys me," Peter thought in great distress. So after that, every time the window

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opened for the storekeeper to take out a stuffed rabbit, Peter would hide behind a box until the window was closed again. Then he would sigh in relief, and sit up once more like the stuffed make-believe rabbits. He continued that performance until every make-believe rabbit was sold, and there he was alone, still sitting up straight and stiff, and still making believe he was a stuffed rabbit.

Poor Peter's heart kept going pit-a-pat, pit-a-pat, and he wondered what in the world would happen next.

This is what happened: Peter heard the storekeeper, whose name

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was Mr. Brown, saying, "Little girl, I am very sorry, but every rabbit's been sold."

Peter peeped at Mr. Brown and saw that he was a fat, jolly-faced man, and that he was talking to a pretty little girl who wore a red tam-o'shanter.

"Oh, yes, sir, there's one rabbit left," cried the little girl. "I saw him in the window just a moment ago."

"Bless my soul," said Mr. Brown, looking at the little girl through his big spectacles as though he thought she didn't know what she was talking about. But just the same he went to the window, and sure enough there sat Peter.

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"Bless my soul," said Mr. Brown again, and he caught Peter up by the ears, and Peter just yelled at the top of his voice. Then Mr. Brown put Peter on the counter, and he laughed and laughed until the tears ran down his jolly face. For of course Mr. Brown had not expected to find a live rabbit in his window.

"Please, sir, I would like to buy him," said the pretty little girl.

But Mr. Brown shook his head and said he could not sell a rabbit that did not belong to him. Peter felt very grateful to Mr. Brown, and told him right then and there that he had run away from home, and that he had been chased by a great

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big dog, and that he had taken refuge in the cellar, and had climbed upstairs, and had been dropped by someone into the show window among the make-believe rabbits.

How the little girl and jolly Mr. Brown did laugh at Peter being taken for a stuffed rabbit.

"And pray tell me, where were you every time I went to the show window to take a rabbit out?" asked Mr. Brown, looking pretty sharply at Peter.

"Oh," said Peter, "I hid behind a box in the corner."

"Well, you are a smart little rabbit, Peter," said Mr. Brown, patting Peter's head. "I think your being

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in that window helped me to sell out my Easter bunnies, and you shall be rewarded."

Peter decided it was best not to tell Mr. Brown that he had sat up straight and stiff like the make-believe bunnies because all the time he was frightened nearly out of his wits. Nor did he tell Mr. Brown that he had hidden behind the box in the corner because he was afraid someone would buy him.

Mr. Brown put a little gold watch in Peter's pocket, and Peter was so proud that he had to hold it to the little girl's ear so she could hear it go, "tick-tick-tick."

"It is the prettiest watch I ever

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saw," said the little girl, shaking her brown curls under the red tam-o'-shanter.

"My sisters will think it is grand," said Peter.

"So you have some sisters?" asked Mr. Brown.

"Oh, my, yes," Peter replied. "I have a Mother, and three sisters, Flopsy, and Mopsy, and Cotton-tail."

"See here," began the storekeeper, propping his spectacles on his forehead. "You must surely take some Easter presents to them."

"Oh, I would love to," said Peter.

Then Mr. Brown went off to select the gifts for Peter to take to old Mother Rabbit, and Flopsy, and

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Mopsy, and Cotton-tail. And while he was gone the little girl asked Peter if he would like to hear a tune on one of the little talking machines.

Peter said that he thought "Rock-a-bye-baby" was a nice tune. But Peter said that because it was the only tune he knew, and he didn't want the little girl to think he knew nothing at all about music. The little girl said she thought it was a very pretty tune too, but, I am ashamed to say, before it was finished Peter had spied a velocipede with yellow wheels, and had hopped upon it.

Round and round the store he

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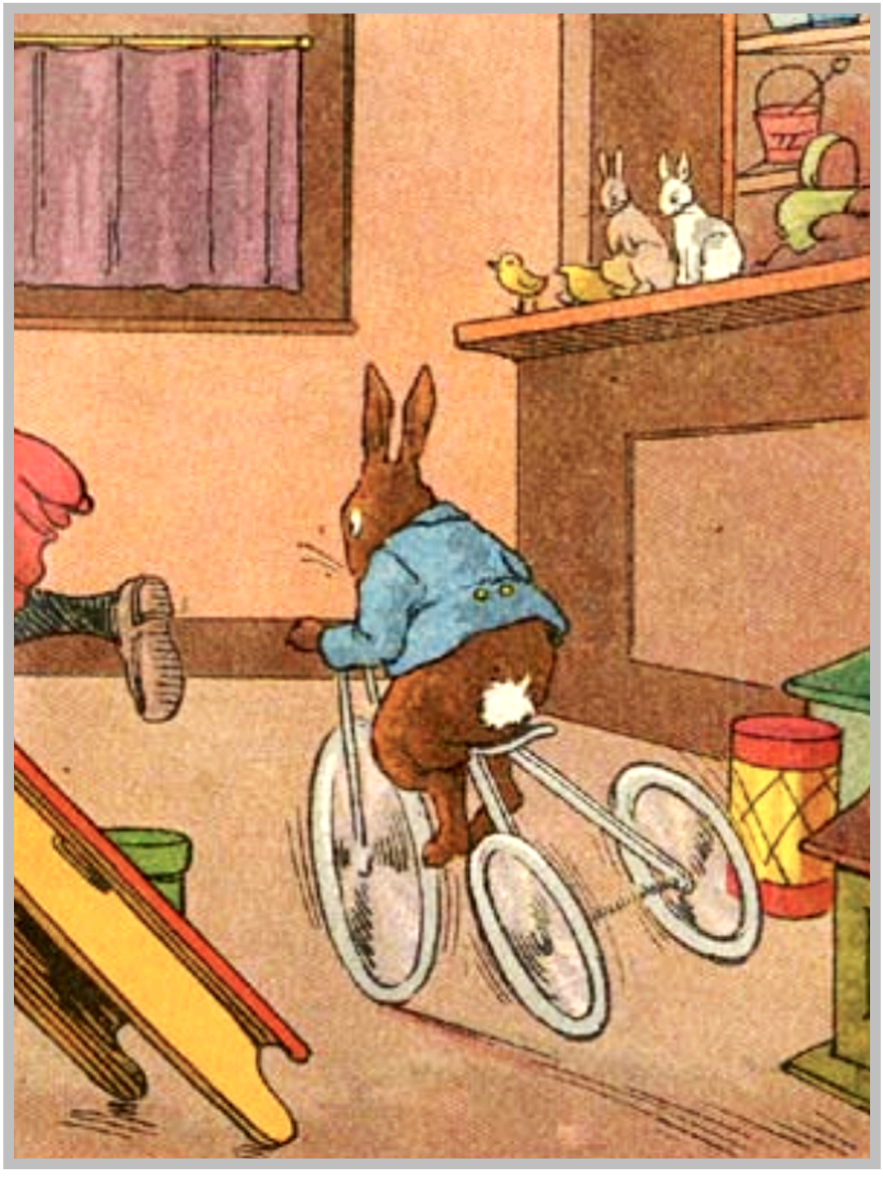
rode, and the little girl had to run ahead to get things out of the way. Peter certainly was having a grand time, but after awhile he stopped, and said his legs were so tired that he didn't think he could ever walk home.

"You can ride home in my automobile, Peter," said the little girl. "It is just outside Mr. Brown's door."

And Peter was so happy at the thought of riding home in an automobile that his eyes shone like stars.

Then Peter ran down into the cellar to get his shoes, and when he came up Mr. Brown told him he would send old Mother Rabbit a very stylish Easter bonnet trimmed



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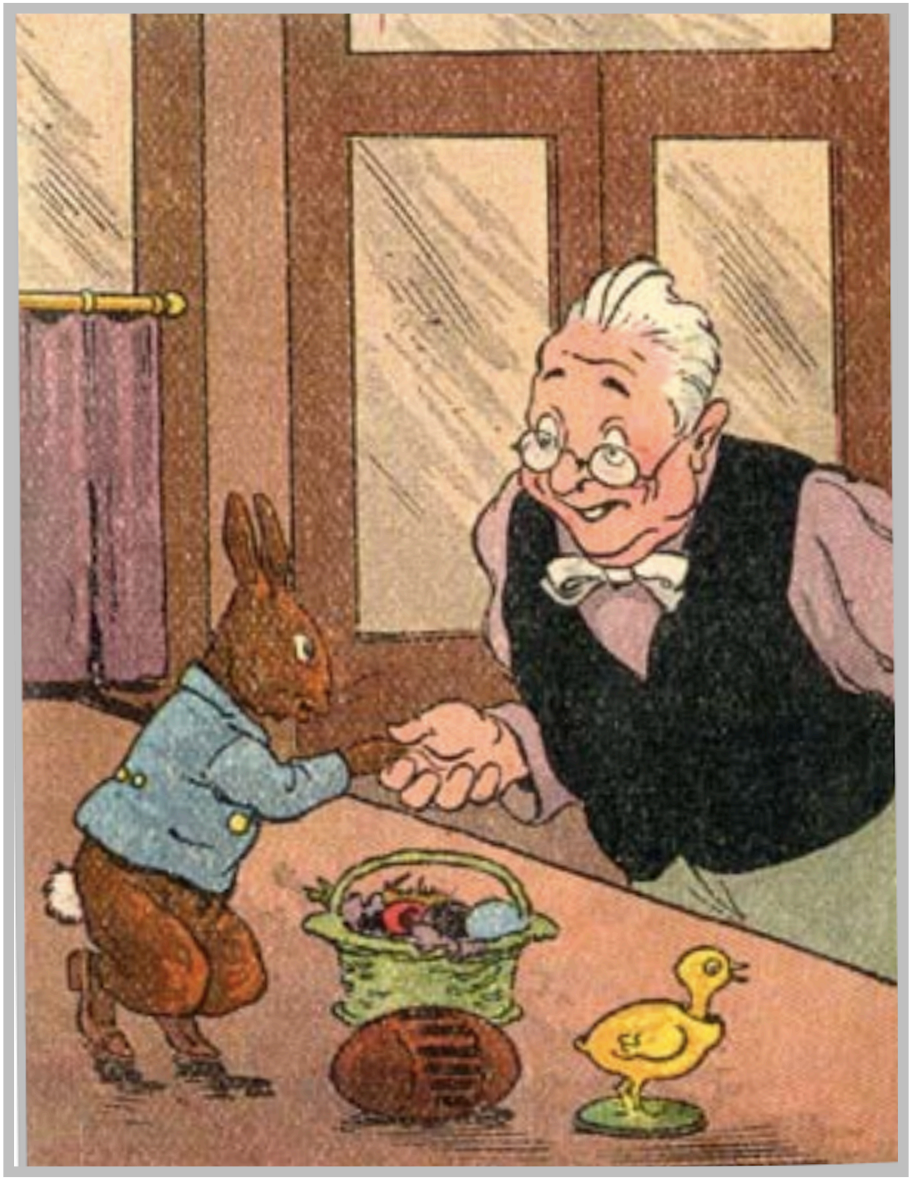
with ribbons and roses. Flopsy was to have a little green basket filled with colored eggs, all nestled in a bed of moss. Mopsy was to get a fuzzy stuffed chickie that said "Peep-peep-peep" when you gave it the wee-est squeeze, and Cotton-tail was to have a chocolate candy egg with her name on it. Peter was so glad the chocolate candy egg was for Cotton-tail, because he thought it was the prettiest present of all.

Peter thanked Mr. Brown, and said he would come to see him again some day. Then he ran out to the automobile with the basket of presents on his arm.



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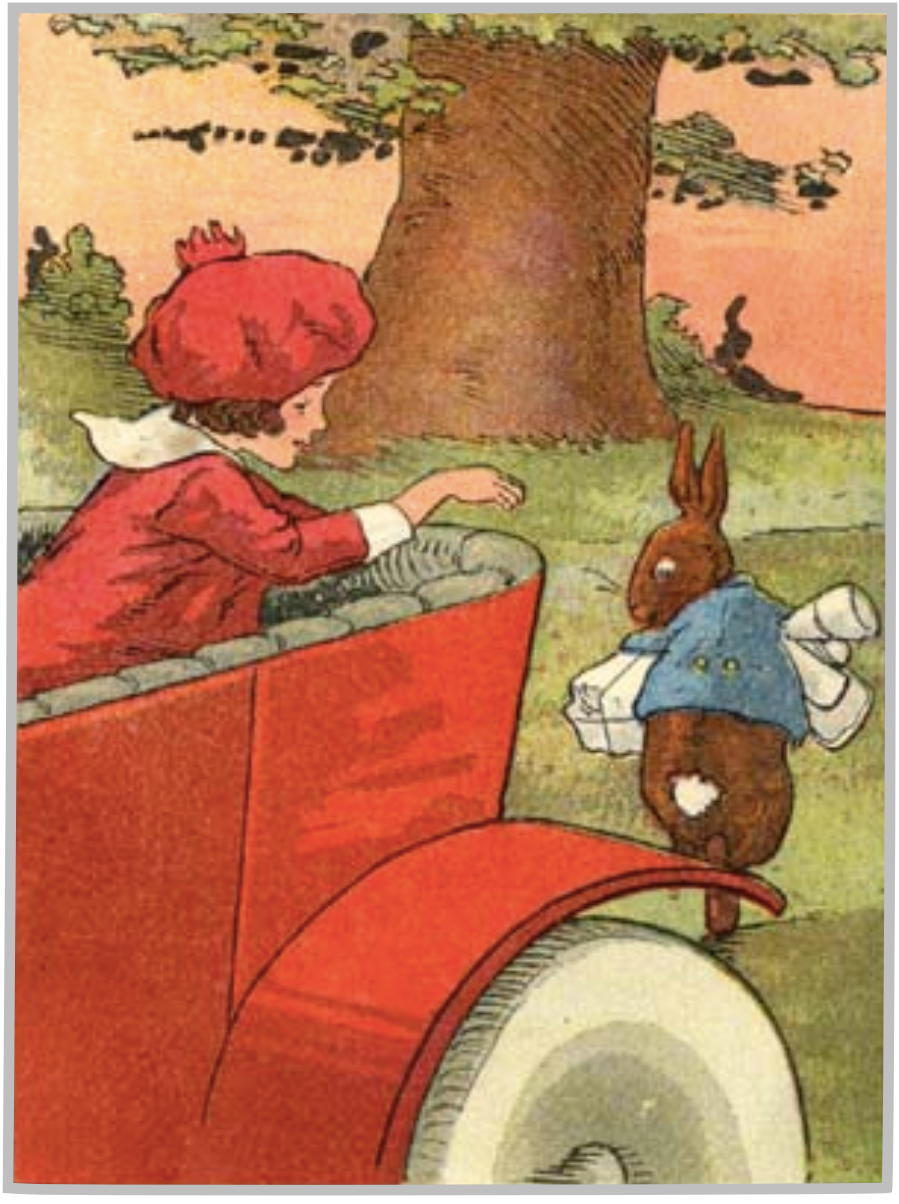
"I like to go fast," he confided to the little girl as they went whirling along.

"Oh, yes," said the little girl, "all boys like to go fast. My brother Bobby likes to go as fast as the wind."

It was almost dark when they came in sight of the fir tree at the edge of the wood. Peter told the chauffeur he might as well stop at the top of the hill.

"Goodbye, little girl," Peter cried as he hopped out and ran towards the fir tree.

"Goodbye, Peter," called the little girl, and she waved her hand just as long as she could see Peter.



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When Peter reached home old Mother Rabbit was sitting by the window. Her hands were folded in her lap and her eyes looked very sad. Flopsy and Mopsy were getting supper, but Cotton-tail sat on the doorstep softly crying.

But suddenly she saw Peter skipping up the walk, gleefully waving the little basket, and she uttered such an exclamation of delight that out came old Mother Rabbit followed by Flopsy and Mopsy.

And they were all so glad to see Peter, and so pleased with the gifts Mr. Brown had sent them, that they forgot to scold Peter for his disobedience. And Peter was so glad to

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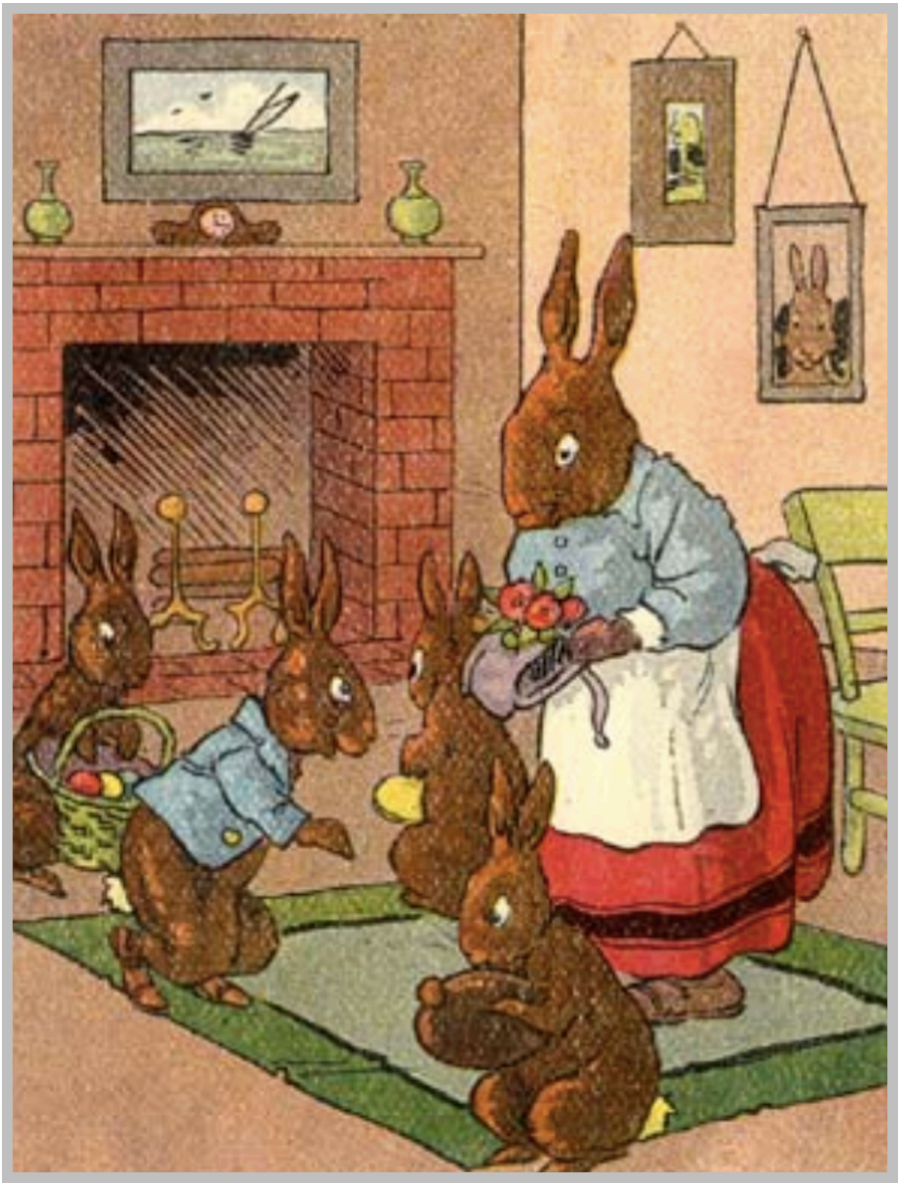

Peter Rabbit's Easter

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be home with his Mother, and Flopsy, and Mopsy, and Cotton-tail, that he promised himself he would never disobey his Mother again.

THE END

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LINDA ALMOND
USA
1881-1987

PETER RABBITS' BIRTHDAY

PETER RABBIT AND LITTLE WHITE RABBIT

WHEN PETER RABBIT WENT TO SCHOOL

PETER RABBIT'S EASTER

PETER RABBIT AND THE OLD WITCH WOMAN

WHEN PETER RABBIT WENT A-FISHING

PETER RABITS' WEDDING

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